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Disarmament Commission

227th Meeting
Monday, 12 April 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Abdelaziz . . . . . (Egypt)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

General exchange of views *(continued)*

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): My delegation wishes to extend its congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election to preside over this year's session of the Disarmament Commission. We remain confident that under your able guidance, we will succeed in fulfilling the mandate assigned to the Commission by the General Assembly. I should also like to extend our felicitations to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

Indonesia regards the current session of the Disarmament Commission as being of exceptional importance in view of the fact that we are expected to finalize the formulation of principles, guidelines and recommendations on the three agenda items before us, which would be a concrete manifestation of the contributions that a multilateral forum can make to the collective efforts of the international community in the field of arms control and disarmament.

As regards agenda items, Indonesia, as an early proponent of nuclear-weapon-free zones, has already expressed its views on this question. Suffice it to note that the number of countries and regions determined to pursue the goal of nuclear-weapon-free zones has increased over the years, thereby attesting to the reality of their pre-eminence on the contemporary disarmament agenda. This bears testimony also to the zones' multiple roles in stemming proliferation and in promoting a more stable strategic environment. Their importance is evidenced by the efforts made to ensure that they are genuinely free from nuclear weapons and by the concerted efforts of the international community to rid the world of the menace posed by nuclear weapons.

Their importance is further exemplified by the Principles and Objectives adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which called for internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, with the cooperation and support of the nuclear Powers for the relevant Protocols, which is an essential prerequisite for the unfettered effectiveness of these zones.

Despite these positive developments, the nuclear-weapon States have yet to ratify the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty. This in turn has raised unsettling questions concerning the right of States to create nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States concerned and to ensure their security through means of their choice. We remain hopeful, however, that the successful conclusion of the ongoing negotiations will not only reaffirm nuclear-weapon-free zones as a modality to promote our commonly held objectives on nuclear armaments but also further reinforce the status of the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

My delegation has greatly benefited from the numerous working papers submitted by various delegations. Taken together, they have demonstrated, among other things, that it is an evolving process, region-specific — hence the differing provisions of each treaty. They delineate the rights and obligations of the States

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belonging to nuclear-weapon-free zones and of the external Powers. Such a delineation is important in clarifying the stringent requirements inherent in regionalized nuclear-weapon-free zones. They contain important guidelines that can be utilized to further consolidate the existing zones, establish new ones and also facilitate the creation of formal legal links and political cooperation between the existing zones and potential nuclear-weapon-free zones.

With regard to the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), it is pertinent to note that the General Assembly, in a major departure from the Disarmament Commission's practice of considering each issue only for a three-year period, has mandated us to renew our consideration of this question for an unprecedented fourth consecutive year. This reflects the importance which an overwhelming majority of member States attach to its convening, which, we are all aware, is predicated upon a consensus on its objectives and agenda in our deliberations. We now have another opportunity over the next three weeks, which should not be missed, to attain that goal and thereby pave the way for the convening of the preparatory committee, which will decide on a date on which to hold the fourth special session.

My delegation remains hopeful that it can be achieved. We see the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, with the participation of all member States, as being in the interests of all countries in stemming the incessant arms race and in achieving substantial progress to limit and eliminate real armaments through a balanced agenda, which is an indispensable requirement for a substantive outcome. In the non-paper submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement, the Movement has set out its position on the objectives of the fourth special session and a draft agenda that includes all relevant nuclear and conventional armaments and related issues as well as the machinery needed for our disarmament endeavours as we move into the millennium. These and other proposals, taken together, offer heightened prospects for the emergence of a consensus on the contentious issues that may lead to the drafting of a forward-looking plan of action.

It is also the view of the non-aligned countries and other States that discussions at the current session of the Disarmament Commission should now be directed towards submerging our differences in the larger interests of the international community, laying the groundwork for the convening of the preparatory committee and exploring issues to be addressed at the special session. This calls for a flexible and constructive approach to ensure the success of our endeavours. Failure, on the other hand, would have negative implications for disarmament and might run the risk of delaying action into an uncertain future. Our collective experience in limiting armaments provides ample evidence that failure to seize an opportunity can result in regrettable delays.

My delegation is gratified to note that item 6 on our agenda has been accorded considerable significance by many member States in their quest to consolidate peace through practical disarmament measures while focusing particular attention on small arms and the illicit transfer of weapons, which have caused irreparable harm to the fabric of many societies. Such concerns have been fully reflected in a series of activities undertaken in various regions of the world. These include, *inter alia*, the approach adopted by the United Nations in Mali and the surrounding West African nations; the task force established by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to formulate guidelines on conflict, peace and development cooperation; the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials and Other Appropriate Actions adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS); and the international conference on a moratorium of small arms transfers held in Norway. Collectively, they demonstrate the complexity and interlinked nature of the issues involved and also show us the modalities through which to resolve them. Our consideration of this issue has been greatly enriched by these and other endeavours and calls for coordinated efforts in deriving the utmost benefit, especially for regional and subregional organizations such as the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In conclusion, my delegation remains optimistic that our deliberations on the agenda items will lead to the identification of principles, guidelines and recommendations and thereby facilitate negotiations on specific issues. In these endeavours, we are heartened by the degree of support extended to the papers submitted by the Chairmen of the three Working Groups, which, in our view, constitute a useful basis for our renewed consideration and conclusion of the agenda items. The successful outcome of our efforts will reinforce the confidence which the States Members of the Organization have reposed in the Disarmament Commission as a crucial component of multilateral disarmament efforts.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to preside over the Disarmament Commission at this session. I am confident that, with your diplomatic skill and knowledge of disarmament and international security, our current deliberations will lead to a successful conclusion. May I take this opportunity to extend my felicitations to the other members of the Bureau on their election. I would also like to express my delegation's sincere gratitude to Mr. Sergei Martynov of Belarus, who conducted the proceedings of the Commission in 1998 in an excellent manner.

The Commission this year has been assigned a difficult task to pursue. Two agenda items of the Commission have been under consideration for two years and the third one — the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament — for three. Therefore, it is imperative for this universal body to fulfil its mandate by adopting necessary recommendations and guidelines on the three agenda items at the end of its deliberations this year. Manifestly enough, the Commission will not succeed in meeting its goals if a sense of understanding, flexibility and a spirit of compromise are not forged by the member States in the course of the current session.

Let me begin by briefly touching upon the important issue of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which is now being discussed for the fourth consecutive year. It is indeed regrettable to witness that, despite the General Assembly's resolutions, which have pertinently and unquestionably underlined the significance of this issue, the convening of the fourth special session has yet to materialize and its agenda and objectives are yet to be agreed upon. The adoption of a resolution by consensus on the fourth special session on disarmament clearly demonstrated the determination of its sponsors to find a common understanding with a view to convening that session.

The convening of a high-level disarmament session at the beginning of the new century and millennium would provide the international community with the opportunity to objectively review its past achievements in the areas of war prevention, disarmament and security and, accordingly, to set a disarmament agenda and establish an inclusive global security system for the future. We are cognizant of difficulties and challenges which may render our duties unfulfilled. In order to remove such barriers, my delegation concurs with the view that the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should have a balanced agenda which would address the concerns of all States. Our co-sponsorship of the relevant resolution is vivid testimony to our good will and spirit of compromise in this respect. However, we firmly believe that the agenda of the fourth special session should not ignore or depart from the priorities envisaged by the first.

In our opinion, nuclear weapons have no place in any global security system in the future and they should be banned and destroyed totally. We cannot seek to establish a civilized community of human beings and States without accepting the premise that all States have an equal right to survive and to guarantee peace and security to their peoples and citizens. Nuclear weapons, by their very existence, undermine this basic principle, as well as the most fundamental human rights and the very foundations of international humanitarian law.

The elimination of nuclear weapons undoubtedly remains the highest priority of the international community, and, for that obvious reason, the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and related security matters should effectively deal with that issue of great sensitivity and magnitude. In our view, SSOD IV should concentrate, *inter alia*, on strengthening the central role of the United Nations in the process of disarmament along with other recognized mechanisms, as well as on reaffirming the role of multilateralism in international affairs, especially in the field of disarmament. Our earnest hope is that all members of the Commission will use their best efforts to finalize discussions on this item and will conclude the item by the end of the current session of the Commission.

It is widely recognized that the creation of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world constitutes an important confidence-building, non-proliferation and disarmament measure that enhances regional as well as global peace and security. This crucial notion was reflected in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in numerous subsequent documents and in the principles and objectives of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

This positive momentum will be revived if more States and regions are covered by agreements and treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones. We note the fact that such regions cover almost 50 per cent of the Earth's land mass, and their establishment is a pivotal step towards

nuclear disarmament. The recent developments in South Asia underscore the vitality of this issue. The gravity of the situation in the Middle East, where such a zone has not been established, can by no means be underestimated. The clandestine nuclear programmes of Israel, the only non-party to the NPT in the region, and its refusal to put its installations under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), continue to preclude the realization of this significant goal in the Middle East. It is the responsibility of the international community to exert every pressure on Israel to immediately abandon its nuclear programmes, accede without any preconditions to the NPT and put its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. Iran, which has been in the vanguard as a proponent of the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, has done, and continues to do, its part to achieve this goal. The security of the Middle East cannot be realized through the arms race or a campaign of disinformation and intimidation.

It is a proven fact that a selective approach on nuclear non-proliferation will have disastrous effects. Hence, the responsibility of extraregional countries, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, in the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones should be well elaborated in the guidelines and recommendations of the Disarmament Commission. The obstacles that hinder the establishment of such zones in sensitive regions such as the Middle East should be identified and properly dealt with, taking into account the fact that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a confidence-building measure should not be contingent upon any other requirements.

The most recent non-aligned summit, in Durban, South Africa, called for the establishment of a subsidiary body to Main Committee I of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT to consider and recommend proposals on the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The recommendations of the Disarmament Commission should be a valuable contribution to the work of that subsidiary body.

Allow me now to touch upon the Commission item entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N".

The excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons contribute to exacerbating conflicts by increasing their lethal nature and duration. They not only hamper conflict resolution and cause negotiated peace settlements to deteriorate, but are also affiliated to crimes, violence, lawlessness and terrorist activities. This global problem requires solutions based on international cooperation and a common approach. The Commission should thus play a constructive role, within its mandate, by adopting guidelines on preventive activities, reduction measures, assistance activities and awareness programmes in post-conflict situations.

The Disarmament Commission guidelines should take into account other relevant factors that have a bearing on the security of the region concerned, such as social and economic development. It should also consider the role of supplier States and companies in prolonging the conflicts and pronounce that any practical disarmament measures within the realm of a sovereign State must be carried out with the consent of the State concerned.

In conclusion, I would like to reassure you, Mr. Chairman, of our firm commitment to closely cooperating with you, the Chairmen of the Working Groups and other delegations towards achieving a fruitful outcome to our discussions at this session of the Commission.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): The delegation of Bangladesh congratulates you, Sir, on your unanimous election as Chairman of the Commission, and assures you of its unstinted support as you guide our work.

My delegation would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his excellent and comprehensive presentation covering the various issues before the Commission. We also commend him for the good work being done by his Department since its establishment last year under his leadership.

Bangladesh's commitment to the goal of general and complete disarmament is unequivocal and flows from our constitutional obligation. Our adherence to major disarmament treaties stems from that. To this end, we have supported, and shall continue to support, all efforts leading towards total and complete disarmament, including the effective elimination of all nuclear weapons.

The Secretary-General noted in his report on the work of the Organization that we are at a critical moment in the history of efforts to reduce the danger posed by nuclear weapons. In that context, he rightly pointed out

that it is of the utmost importance that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), together with the objectives agreed to at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), become universally accepted. The NPT called for negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the elimination of nuclear weapons at an early date. But regrettably, the international community has yet to agree on a time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons.

In the field of conventional arms, attention has remained focused on transparency in armaments. Reporting to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms remains limited, with about half of the United Nations membership, including some of the major importers, not providing any data. We commend the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. Here, I would also like to inform the Commission that in Bangladesh a decision has been taken at the Cabinet level to provide necessary information for inclusion in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

The open sale and easy availability of small arms are matters of serious concern. The abundant and ready supply of easy-to-use tools of conflict is responsible for an estimated 90 per cent of deaths and injuries; a shocking 80 per cent of the victims are women and children. While the major armies of the world are disarming, civilians are re-arming. Illicit international transfers of small arms and their accumulation in many countries constitute a threat to the populations of those countries and to national and regional security, and are a factor contributing to the destabilization of States. The problem has been exacerbated by the absence of global norms or standards to reduce such accumulation and transfer. It is imperative that the international community address this problem as a matter of utmost importance and urgency. One approach to the problem would be to seek to build a global consensus on monitoring and controlling illicit arms transfers and their links with trafficking in other contraband goods. The convening in the near future of a United Nations conference on all aspects of the illicit arms trade would be an important step in that direction. We welcome the offer of the Government of Switzerland to host such a conference.

Since the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction came into force after its signature in December 1997, more than 100 countries, including Bangladesh, have joined the Ottawa process. Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly have urged all States and regional organizations to intensify their efforts to contribute to the objective of the elimination of anti-personnel landmines, and have welcomed as interim measures various bans, moratoriums and other restrictions on anti-personnel landmines already declared by States. They have called upon States that have not yet done so to declare and implement such measures and other restrictions as soon as possible. We hope that the First Meeting of the States Parties to the anti-personnel landmines Treaty, to be held in Maputo next month, will contribute to our joint endeavours to eliminate the menace of these weapons of destruction.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was adopted by an overwhelmingly positive vote at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. A total of 158 countries, including Bangladesh, voted in favour of resolution 50/245; this included the five nuclear-weapon States. Bangladesh welcomes the decision of India and Pakistan, as announced by their Prime Ministers in the General Assembly last year, to join the CTBT. We see this as a positive step towards ensuring peace and security in the South Asian region, and as conducive to fostering fruitful economic cooperation in the region. Bangladesh's major concern, as a least developed country, has been the high financial obligations that would devolve on the States parties on account of the implementation of the CTBT, including the expenses of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, of that organization itself, and of the verification regime, including the international CTBT monitoring system and the Provisional Technical Secretariat. As coordinator of the least developed countries, Bangladesh has already voiced the concern of those countries about this matter in various relevant forums, including the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

As a party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, Bangladesh is fully aware of its responsibilities, and takes its obligations seriously. By not having developed, acquired or stockpiled biological weapons, Bangladesh is in full compliance with the provisions of the Convention. Full adherence to the Convention by all States would be an ultimate guarantee ensuring the effective elimination of biological weapons. There is therefore a clear need for charting a credible compliance regime. In this context, Bangladesh welcomes the ongoing work of the ad hoc group entrusted to

negotiate a protocol to strengthen the Convention by developing verification and compliance mechanisms.

As for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, Bangladesh was among the first to sign it, and although we have no chemical weapons programme or facilities, we ratified the Convention two years ago. But ratification of the Convention will have little meaning unless the major chemical weapons countries join it. We emphasize the necessity of universal adherence to the Convention, and call upon all States that have not done so to become parties to the Convention without further delay. We also underline the importance of the early initiation of activities under all relevant provisions of the Convention by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

We call for an early convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It is time that the international community again reviewed the implementation of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly as well as the outcomes of the subsequent special sessions on disarmament, and took stock of the international security and disarmament situation in the post-cold-war era. While nuclear disarmament should remain the highest priority for us, we have to identify the emerging challenges presented by the new era and formulate an agreed plan of action to deal with these in a true spirit of multilateralism. My delegation believes that only a special session of the General Assembly can address the broad subject of disarmament, taking into account in particular its relationship to development, with the comprehensiveness and thoroughness it deserves.

In today's world, regional disarmament presents newer challenges. The continued arms race, which is a result of unresolved problems, is a formidable source of threats to security and is draining considerable resources from many countries at the cost of investment in economic and social development. It is our belief that while regional confidence-building measures can go a long way, true regional disarmament will largely depend on understanding at the global level and on courageous gestures from major Powers. Regional disarmament will not advance unless legitimate security concerns are addressed adequately.

In this connection, we expect that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific will be given more support and assistance in order for it to be more active in promoting the dialogue on disarmament on the regional and subregional planes that has come to be known as the Kathmandu process. Bangladesh strongly feels and has urged that the Centre should operate entirely from Kathmandu and not from New York as is now the case. There is no reason for the Centre to be run from here. We shall expect that the Department of Disarmament Affairs, the creation of which we have wholeheartedly welcomed, will address this question seriously, in compliance with General Assembly resolution 53/78 B, and take necessary follow-up action on it expeditiously, including working out the budgetary requirement for moving the Centre to Kathmandu. Concerned Member States should be regularly informed of progress in this regard.

The Disarmament Commission is the specialized deliberative body of the United Nations entrusted with the task of in-depth consideration of specific disarmament issues. We strongly support the work of this multilateral machinery and believe that in this forum there is scope for harmonious and effective work. The result of such work can definitely have a positive impact on the world disarmament scenario.

Mr. Dausá Cérpedes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all, on behalf of the Cuban delegation and on my own behalf, to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the Chair of the Disarmament Commission for this session. We would also like to extend our congratulations to all the other members of the Bureau. Under your guidance the success of our work is assured.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to Mr. Sergei Martynov of Belarus and to his team for their excellent leadership of the Commission during the previous session, and to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for his excellent presentation to us this morning.

Cuba firmly supports the work of this Commission as the single deliberative body in the disarmament arena that enjoys universal participation. It is precisely through dialogue and negotiation that we will be able to achieve agreements that are acceptable to all. To presume to impose solutions by force is incompatible with all civilized thinking and with the basic principles of international law.

Regrettably, however, as we meet here today the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is pursuing its

military aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law. The competency of the Security Council, which neither authorized nor in fact was even asked to authorize these actions, has been blatantly undermined.

Some of those who today are leading the military actions under way in civilized Europe are the same ones who are at the forefront of opposing the immediate initiation of multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament and who persist in maintaining their obsolete nuclear deterrence policies.

It is a cause of concern that a lack of political will on the part of some of its member States has caused the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to fail to establish an ad hoc committee to initiate negotiations on nuclear disarmament, although the international community has repeatedly attached the highest priority to this disarmament issue.

This year the task to be completed by the Disarmament Commission will be particularly difficult since it has to simultaneously conclude three substantive items, each of which presents its own complexities.

Dealing with such a large volume of work in the short space of three weeks will adversely affect the smaller delegations' ability to effectively attend meetings, which will be held in parallel throughout almost the entire session. We hope that, in keeping with the resolution on the rationalization of the Disarmament Commission adopted last year in the General Assembly, from the next session onwards there will no longer be parallel meetings of the subsidiary organs of the Disarmament Commission.

On the other hand, in my delegation's view, there is something that has helped this session get off to a positive start: the early appointment of the Chairmen of the Working Groups, which provided them, to a greater or lesser degree, the opportunity to hold informal consultations during the inter-sessional period. We think that adopting this system as a practice in the future will be of significant benefit to the Commission.

Since the items have been on the agenda for two years — in fact, three years as regards the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament — the positions and specific proposals of delegations on each of our three substantive items are well known. This is why on this occasion I will limit myself to touching very briefly on some of the questions of special interest to Cuba.

As regards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at, we believe that the document presented by the Chairman of the relevant Working Group during the inter-sessional period provides an excellent foundation, including formulations that will undoubtedly make it possible to achieve a consensus without undue difficulties.

Each nuclear-weapon-free zone is the product of specific regional circumstances and a manifestation of the situation prevailing in one of the various diverse regions.

In the specific case of Cuba, our position with respect to the Treaty of Tlatelolco must be seen in the context of the exceptional situation produced by the blockade policy and the aggressive climate that the Government of the United States has developed in opposition to our country.

As a reaffirmation of its support for the objectives that motivate our region to work towards the denuclearization of Latin America and the Caribbean, in 1995 Cuba signed the relevant Treaty. The right moment for us to ratify the Treaty is indissolubly linked to changes in circumstances that would allow the emergence and consolidation of a climate of peace and full respect in relations between Cuba and the United States. This must entail the ending of the policy of aggression and the repeal of all restrictive measures against Cuba.

At any rate, it will certainly not be Cuba that places in jeopardy the lofty and noble purposes enshrined in the Treaty of Tlatelolco. At the recent forty-second General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) my country signed the Regional Cooperative Arrangements for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America (ARCAL), and at present my Government is holding conversations with the Secretariat of the IAEA to examine the possible incorporation of some of the measures contemplated in the Model Additional Protocol into our IAEA safeguards agreements, which are based on INFCIRC/66.

The situation regarding the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is very clear. Owing to the lack of political will that has been displayed up to the present by the principal military Power in the world, despite the successive resolutions adopted by the General Assembly since 1994, the actual

possibility of the fourth special session being held seems to be receding further and further.

The Non-Aligned Movement has strongly promoted the holding of the special session. Its interest is clearly shown in the fact that consideration of this topic has been prolonged for an additional year in order to make a final effort to achieve agreement on the objectives and agenda of the fourth session, and to progress towards the convening of the session as soon as possible.

This is a crucial year for the future of this item. The consensus mechanism cannot continue to be manipulated indefinitely in order to postpone agreement.

For Cuba, the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, along with the priorities that Document sets, are the basic reference for developing a future programme of action on disarmament.

"Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N" is probably the most complex item to be examined and finalized by our Commission this year. Its implications require that we achieve a clear definition of its scope so as to avoid divergent and possibly dangerous interpretations. The guidelines to be adopted will have to be applicable to the consolidation of peace in post-conflict situations.

The text that we adopt will have to contain a set of principles to be applied by States in the formulation and implementation of practical disarmament measures in post-conflict situations. Among these principles we will have to include respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the consent of the receiving State, non-interference in internal affairs, and so forth.

The implementation of practical measures for disarmament must not be seen as an end in itself but rather as part of an integrated global approach that deals with the basic underlying causes of conflicts, which are linked with States' problems of economic, political and social development. Achieving lasting peace means establishing an appropriate connection between disarmament and development, along with the requisite resource support from the countries with the greatest capabilities.

I would like to conclude, Mr. Chairman, by reiterating the will of the Cuban delegation to cooperate with you in your difficult task and to contribute through concrete proposals to the success of our work.

Ms. Eshmambetova (Kyrgyzstan): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission and to express confidence that under your guidance we will achieve substantive progress and success at this session. My felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau, unanimously elected by the delegations.

As you said at the beginning, Mr. Chairman, this session concludes the discussion of the issue of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. Therefore, I would like to begin by commenting on this item of the agenda. My delegation strongly supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. Indeed, if we want to build a nuclear-weapon-free world we should be interested in further expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the globe. Including Antarctica, they already cover more than 50 per cent of the earth and include 114 States. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and internationally agreed criteria through the arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned contributes both to non-proliferation and to disarmament and enhances regional and global peace and security.

Since 1994, Kyrgyzstan has been vigorously pushing the idea of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and has been actively involved in the process. At the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), it submitted under item 16 of the agenda the working paper entitled "Nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia", which was later co-sponsored by Uzbekistan. The report of Main Committee II states that,

> "The Conference takes note of the interest of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and believes that it should contribute to peace, stability and security in the region. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan will submit specific proposals in this regard and would welcome their consideration by other concerned States." *(NPT/CONF.1995/MC.II/1, para. 50)*

Those specific proposals were submitted by Kyrgyzstan at the Consultative Meeting of Experts of the Central Asian Countries, the Nuclear-Weapon States and the United Nations, held on 9 and 10 July 1998 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/38 S.

The document entitled "Basic elements of the treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia", which was submitted by Kyrgyzstan on behalf of five Central Asian States, has become the legal framework for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The participants in the Consultative Meeting took note in their joint Communiqué of the progress made by the Central Asian States in establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and encouraged them to continue consultations with experts from nuclear-weapon States.

The Bishkek Consultative Meeting of Experts of Central Asian Countries, Nuclear-Weapon States and the United Nations was followed by the meetings of experts of Central Asian States held in Geneva and Tashkent. Those meetings were also attended by experts of the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency. As a result, almost 80 per cent of the text of the draft treaty was agreed upon. Agreement on the remaining parts will require the political will and vision of the States of the region.

As a peace-loving country, Kyrgyzstan is strongly committed to the cause of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and will spare no effort to bring to fruition the work of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Because five countries of the region are already signatories to the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in central Asia is an additional confidence-building measure and has more of a political than a military dimension.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones can serve multiple purposes. The can have specific characteristics and reflect the commonly held values of the States of the region in the areas of nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. But despite the differences, they have common features and similarities; hence, working from certain guidelines and principles is very helpful for both emerging and future zones.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones play a major role in strengthening the international regime of nuclear non-proliferation. However, horizontal non-proliferation alone will not make the world safer and more secure unless it is accompanied by vertical non-proliferation and a reduction of nuclear stockpiles, with a view to their ultimate total elimination. We therefore support the proposal that the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should address the issues of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and other weapons of mass destruction, notwithstanding the budgetary constraints. The last session of the Commission showed the mounting support for this proposal, and it is our sincere hope that we will be able to reach consensus on the timing, objectives and agenda of the special session.

Conventional weapons such as small arms, light weapons and mines have become a major menace, causing millions of civilian casualties. They threaten security, exacerbate violence, increase human suffering and hinder socio-economic development and political stability. They hamper the implementation of peace agreements, the reconstruction and rehabilitation of countries and the restoration of normal life. Illicit traffic in small arms is often linked to other transnational criminal activities and has both a destabilizing and destructive effect. In this regard, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, as well as regional initiatives, such as the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, ensure transparency and serve as a very important confidence-building measures to overcome mistrust and tension. Kyrgyzstan fully supports these initiatives and commends the work of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and appreciates its recommendations.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that the current session will build upon the progress achieved at the last substantive session. This will ensure the continuity and efficiency of our work and enhance the unique role of the Disarmament Commission as a multilateral deliberative body on disarmament.

I would also like to thank the Department for Disarmament Affairs and Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for their continued support of the endeavours of the Central Asian States in establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region.

Organization of work

The Chairman: We have already run through the list of speakers for today. We still have 10 speakers for the morning session tomorrow and 13 speakers for the afternoon session. I would like to remind delegations that the list of speakers will remain open until 6 p.m. this afternoon, as previously decided.

I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic): I am sorry to take the floor at this stage, but we have a real problem here with the list of speakers. I do not know if the list for tomorrow will cover everybody because unless we find a way to extend the meetings, we will have a problem; or we will have another meeting the next day. As I discussed with the Secretariat, there is no way of adding States to the list of speakers. I therefore urge you, Mr. Chairman, to work with the Secretariat to find a way to make this possible, because many countries would like to inscribe their names on the list of speakers and there is no way for them to do so.

The Chairman: I understand that the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic is referring to his request to speak at the very end of tomorrow afternoon's meeting. He will be the fourteenth speaker, and the Secretariat is worried that we might run out of time. But the Syrian Arab Republic will definitely be the fourteenth speaker, as he requested, and we will handle the situation tomorrow when we reach that stage.

I hope that we will be able to cover everybody by the end of that meeting. If not, we will have to see how the situation develops. I trust that this is acceptable.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.